

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 EB-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5413

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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USDOC FOR STEPHEN CONGER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, BEXP, GB

SUBJ: TRANSGABON RAILROAD: TAMS REQUEST FOR REPRESENTATION
TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR

REF: STATE 102397

1. AS INDICATED IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, I HAVE ON MANY
OCCASIONS DISCUSSED MATTER OF ENGINEERING CONSULTING FIRM
WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR. DURING LAST DISCUSSION I HAD
WITH HIM, HE CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED LETTER FROM
PRESIDENT BONGO ASKING HIS VIEWS CONCERNING TWO SEPARATE
PROPOSALS FOR ENGINEERING CONSULTING JOB (E.E. SOFRERAIL
GROUP INCLUDING TAMS AND OTHER GROUP INCLUDING LOUIS BERGER).
FRENCH AMBASSADOR TOLD ME THAT WHILE HE FELT HE COULD NOT
CATEGORICALLY RECOMMEND ONE GROUP OVER ANOTHER, SINCE
THEY BOTH CONTAINED FRENCH FIRMS, HE INTENDED TO REPLY
TO PRESIDENT BONGO VOUCHING FOR CAPABILITY OF ALL FRENCH
FIRMS INVOLVED BUT INDIRECTLY IMPLYING THAT SELECTION
OF SOFRERAIL GROUP WOULD SEEM NATURAL IN VIEW OF
COMPANY'S PAST EXPERIENCE.

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2. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT PRESIDENT BONGO ASKED ME THE SAME QUESTION IN NEW YORK RECENTLY AND THAT I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM HIM ON MY RETURN REQUESTING MY OWN COMMENTS IN WRITING. IN A LETTER DATED APRIL 23, I WROTE PRESIDENT BONGO STATING THAT BOTH TAMS AND LOUIS BERGER WERE LARGE WELL- KNOWN U.S. COMPANIES WITH CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE ABROAD AND BOTH CAPABLE OF CONTRIBUTING EFFECTIVELY TO SUPERVISION OF WORK ON TRANS-GABON RAILROAD. I WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT INASMUCH AS GROUP LEAD BY SOFRERAIL HAD BEEN LONGER IN PICTURE AND THAT SOFRERAIL ITSELF HAD PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH RAILROAD PROJECT, "IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE UNDERSTANDABLE IF GOG SHOULD CHOOSE THIS GROUP." IN LIGHT OF ABOVE, DO NOT BELIEVE THAT FURTHER DEMARCHE BY ME TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR EITHER NECESSARY OR LIKELY TO BE PRODUCTIVE OF FURTHER ACTION ON HIS PART.

3. WHEN PRESIDENT BONGO DISCUSSED MATTER WITH ME IN NEW YORK, HE INDICATED HIS OWN PREFERENCE FOR HAVING SOFRERAIL INVOLVED IN SUPERVISION WORK. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT DID NOT GO INTO ANY FURTHER DETAIL, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THIS PREFERENCE WOULD AUTOMATICALLY APPLY TO ENTIRE GROUP ASSOCIATED WITH SOFRERAIL INCLUDING TAMS.

4. IN RECENT CONVERSATION I HAD A FEW DAYS AGO WITH AMBASSADOR KASSA-MAPSI IN LIBREVILLE (GOG AMBASSADOR TO COMMON MARKET IN BRUSSELS), I ASKED KASSA-MAPSI WHERE MATTER OF ENGINEERING CONSULTING FIRMS STOOD. KASSA-MAPSI SAID HE HAD ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS GOVERNMENT DISCUSSED MATTER WITH FED AND THAT IT WAS GENERAL FEELING THAT SOME MEETING OF DONORS WOULD BE DESIRABLE PRIOR TO DECISION ON ENGINEERING CONSULTING FIRM. KASSA-MAPSI ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT GOG HAD DEFINITELY DECIDED TO ENGAGE SERVICES OF SUCH A FIRM AND HE ALSO EXPRESSED VIEW THAT SOFRERAIL WOULD SEEM TO BE MOST NATURAL CANDIDATE TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH WORK. WHEN I POINTED OUT TO KASSA-MAPSI THAT IT WOULD SEEM HIGHLY DESIRABLE FOR GOG TO BENEFIT FROM ADVICE OF SUCH FIRM DURING PERIOD OF EXAMINATION OF BIDS AND THAT THERE WOULD SEEM THEREFORE TO BE SOME URGENCY IN REACHING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DECISION IN MATTER, KASSA-MAPSI AGREED AND SAID THAT "DECISION WOULD CERTAINLY BE TAKEN WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS." HE IMPLIED THAT, WHILE GOG FELT IT TO BE CORRECT PROCEDURE TO CONSULT WITH FED AND OTHER DONORS, IT DID NOT INTEND TO ALLOW THIS PROCESS TO DELAY DECISION INDEFINITELY.

5. KASSA-MAPSI CONFIRMED THAT FED COMMITTEE SCHEDULED

TO MEET ON TRANSGABON RAILROAD MAY 28 TO MAKE FINAL
RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF EEC WHO WOULD
THEN TAKE FINAL DECISION WITHIN ABOUT TEN DAYS.
KASSA-MAPSI PROFESSED TO BE FULLY CONFIDENT THAT FED
DECISION WOULD BE POSITIVE. HE DID NOT INDICATE ANY
SPECIFIC PLANS OR DATE FOR A DONORS' MEETING REFERRED
TO ABOVE.
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